Eastern

EASTERN COMICS™

No. 1

$1.75U.S
$2.50CANADA

BLACKMASK

Jong-Jin Lee
Franz Henkel

EASTERN COMICS™

BLACKMASK #1

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Introduction

After Eastern Comics finally convinced Jong-Jin Lee that there was a potential readership for his work in the United States, he was so honored and happy that he started another story right away. You're looking at the product, **Blackmask**, right now. Eastern's other titles, **The Demon Warrior** and **The Forbidden Kingdom**, are martial art dramas set ancient China.

With **Blackmask** we make a jump of several centuries, to the fictional world of newport City, U.S.A., where our hero, Jason Royt, is about to suffer great trauma.... Although Eastern's other two titles are reprints of series that have already been published in Korea, **Blackmask** is unique not only because it is an original new series, but because it involves a rather elaborate trans-Pacific collaboration. **Jong-Jin Lee** did the artwork and the rough storyline for the first issue in Seoul, Korea; I fleshed out the details and characterization in Davis, California. To coordinate our work, we have to rely on the postal service and Eastern's indispensible fax machine.

Blackmask is no Hulk Hogan, although, as Inspector Edgar Kent might say, "The ring is just another stage." Masked pro wrestling in the world of **Blackmask** isn't just entertainment for the masses. The stakes get high and sometimes, as you shall see in future issues, the world and the stage collide.

Franz Henkel

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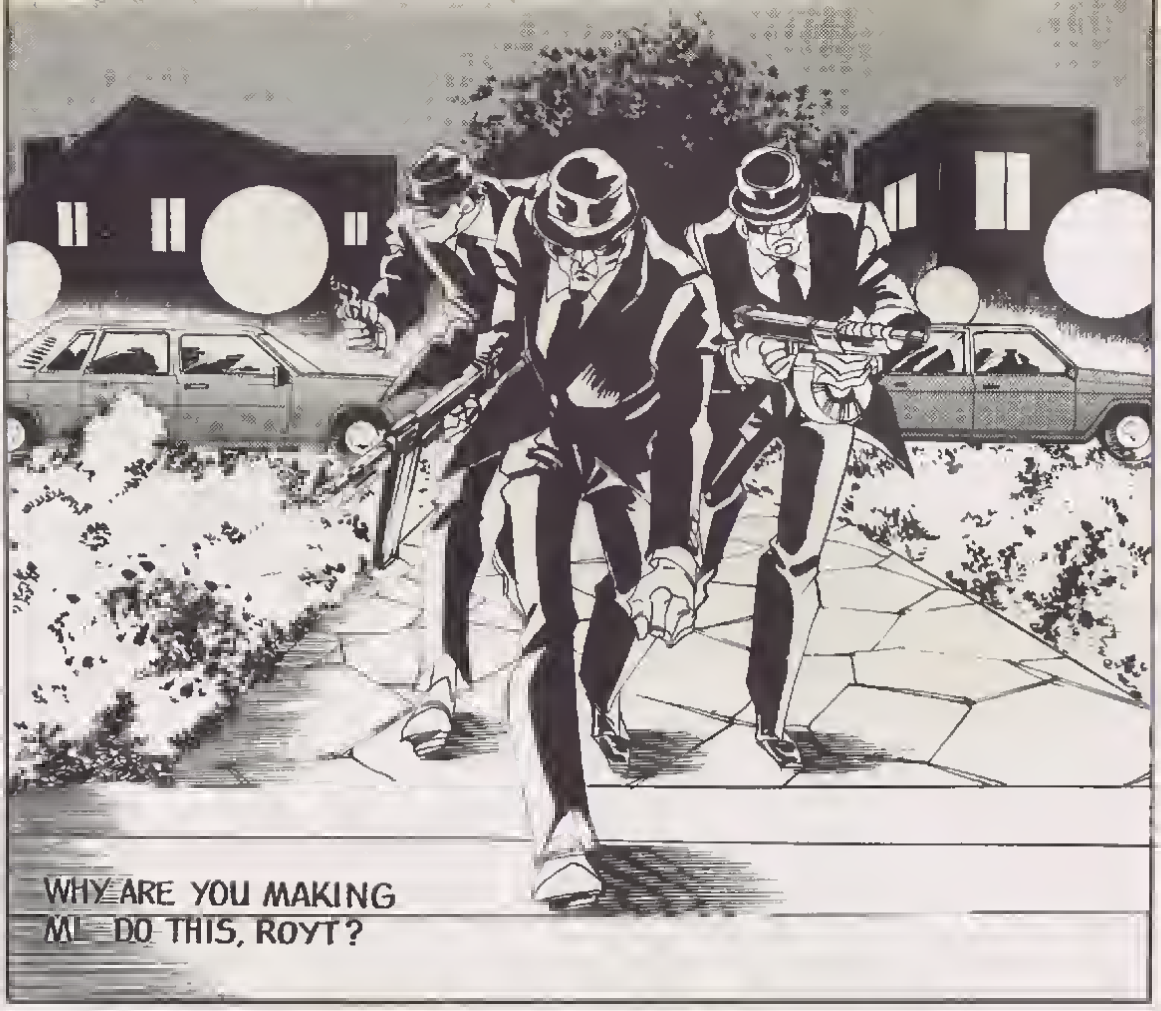
THE BOY-A WORLD CLASS GYMNAST WITH A VENDETTA...
THE COP-A FORMER SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR WITH A SECRET...
THEY'RE OUT TO GET THE MOB.
BLACKMASK
THE STORY BEGINS...

IT'S SUCH A QUIET EVENING...
THEY MUST BE SITTING-DOWN
TO A LATE DINNER ABOUT NOW....

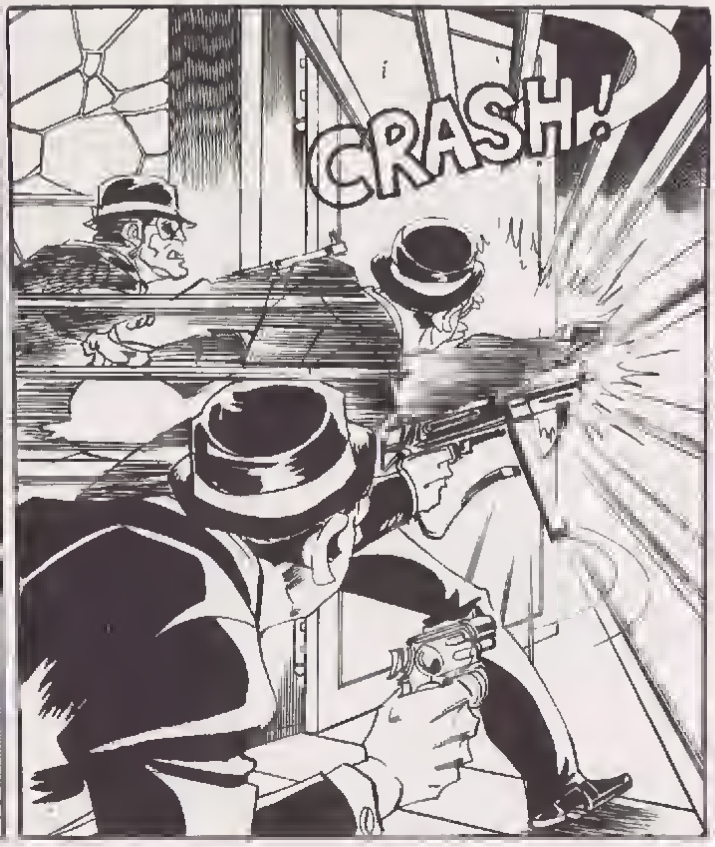
SO WE'LL JUST DRIVE UP NATURALLY...

LIKE OLD FRIENDS COMING
TO PAY A VISIT.

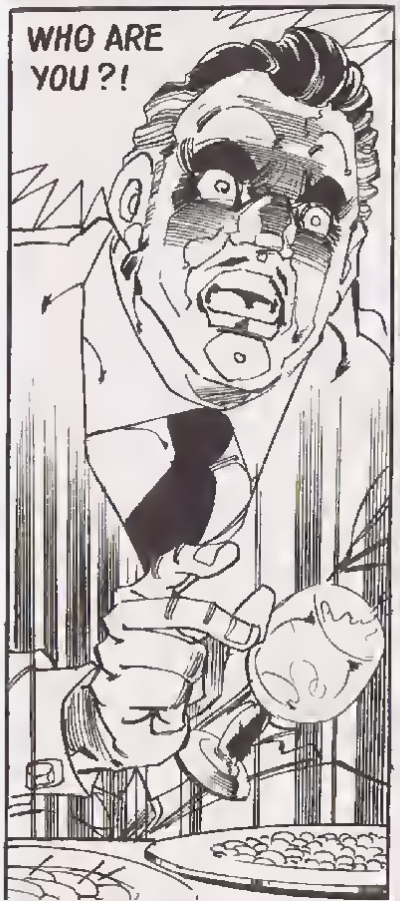
YES, OLD FRIENDS...
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN, ROYT? HOW LONG...
SINCE YOU INVITED ME TO DINNER?
DAMN YOU, ROYT!
VZZZZZ
I WANT NO MISTAKES TONIGHT, IS THAT CLEAR?
YES, SIR, BOSS!

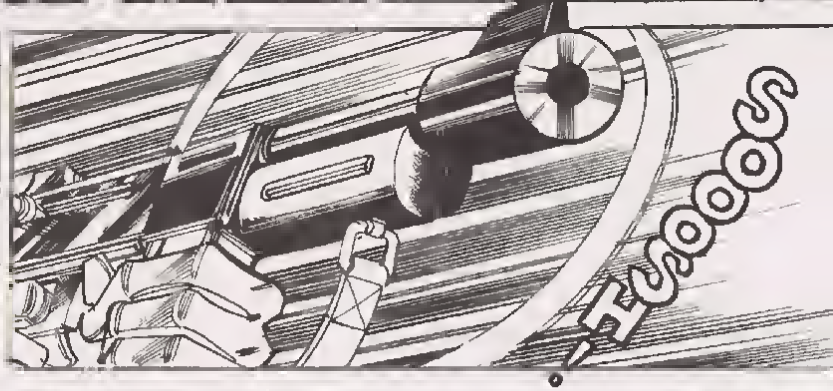

WHY ARE YOU MAKING
ME DO THIS, ROYT?

WHY?


CRASH!

W-WHAT DO YOU WANT?

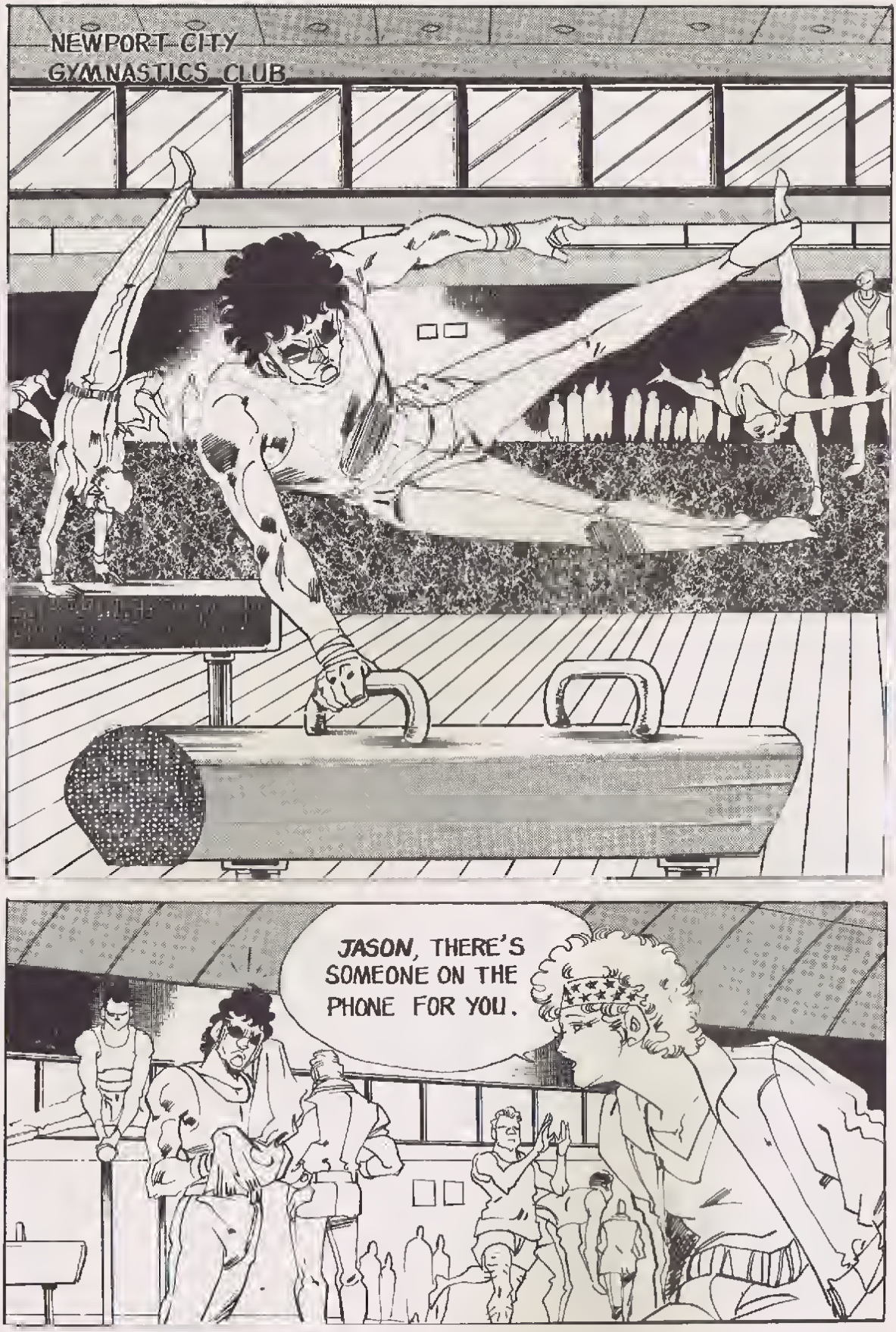

WHO ARE YOU?!


HUOOOS

NO! PLEASE!

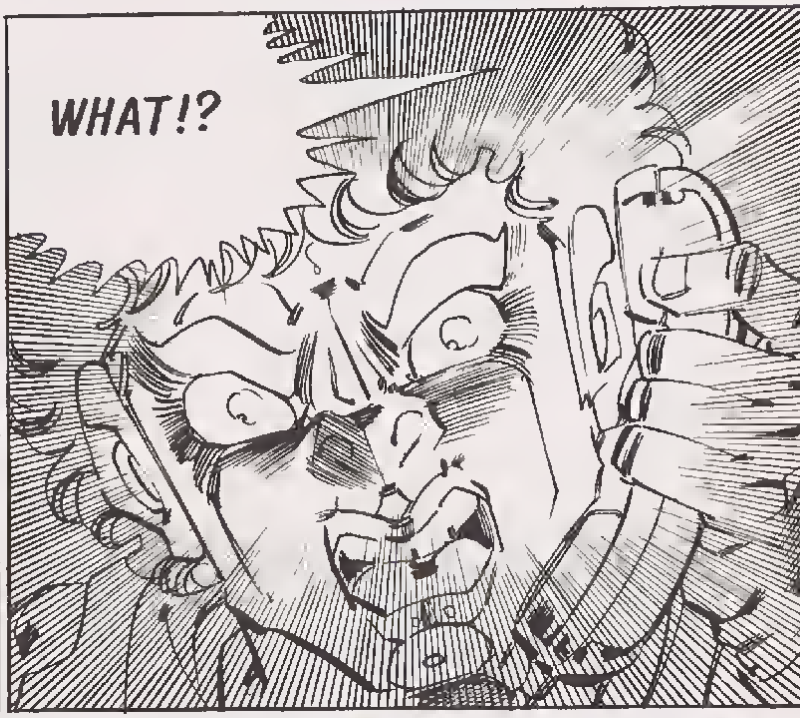
BRRATATATATA!
KRAK!
KRAK!
URGHHH!
THUD!

P-PLEASE! PLEASE DON'T KILL ME....
HEY, WADDAYA DOIN'? LET'S GET IT OVER WITH AND CLEAR OUTTA HERE!
WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF TIME. AIN'T IT A WASTE TO JUST KILL SUCH A PRETTY THING?
GRAB
NO!
RRHHHP!
PLEASE! NO!

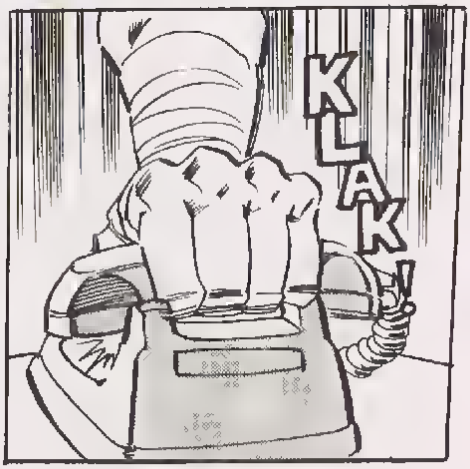

NEWPORT CITY
GYMNASTICS CLUB
JASON, THERE'S SOMEONE ON THE PHONE FOR YOU.

WHO IS IT? NO ONE'S SUPPOSED TO KNOW I'M HERE.
I'M CURIOUS MYSELF. SHE HAS SUCH A LOVELY VOICE.

HELLO? YES, THIS IS JASON SPEAKING.


WHAT!?

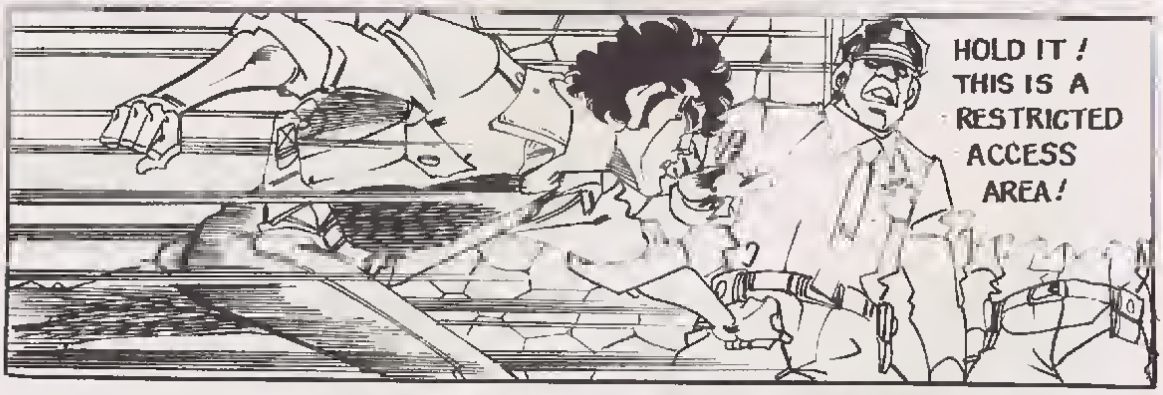
HZZZZZZ
JASON?


KLAK!

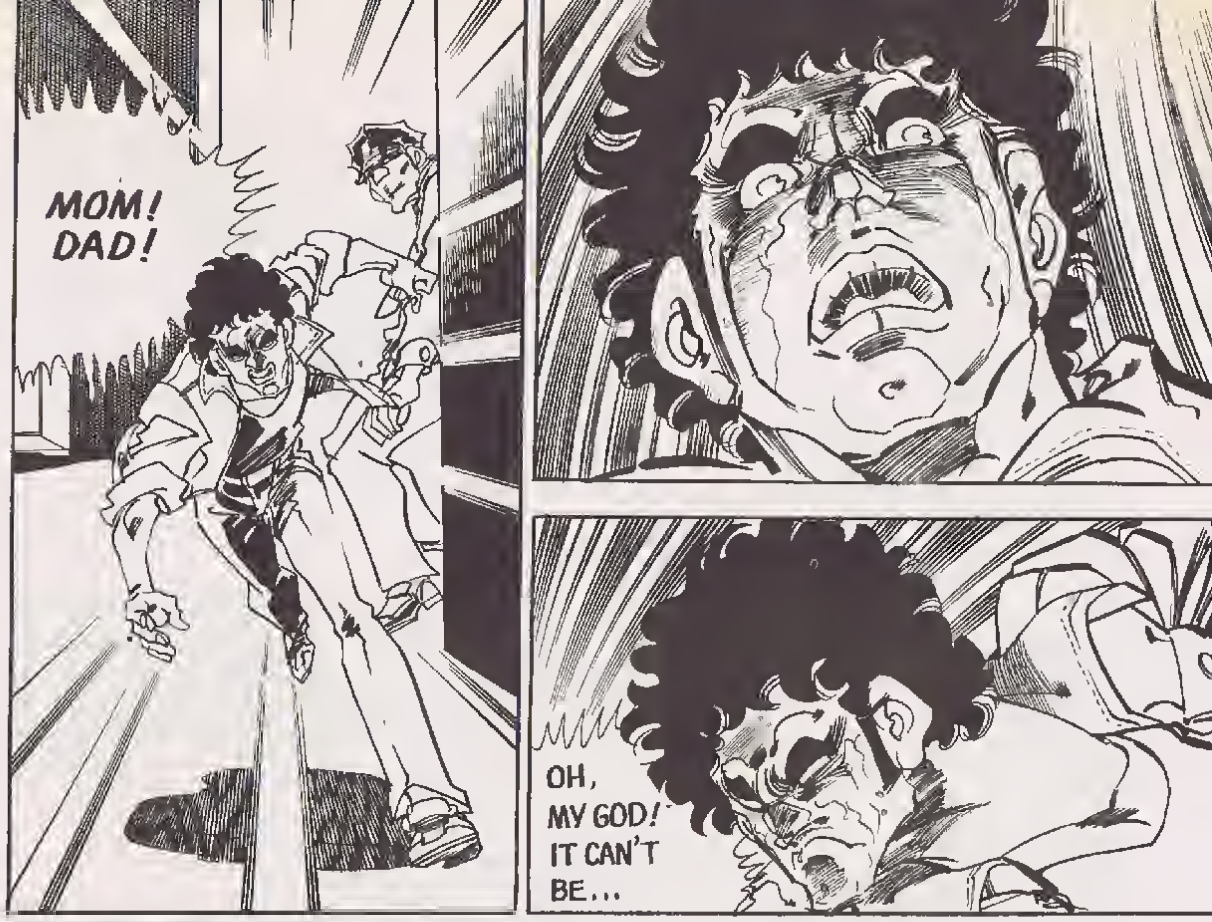
JASON, WAIT!
NO, IT CAN'T BE!
NOOO!

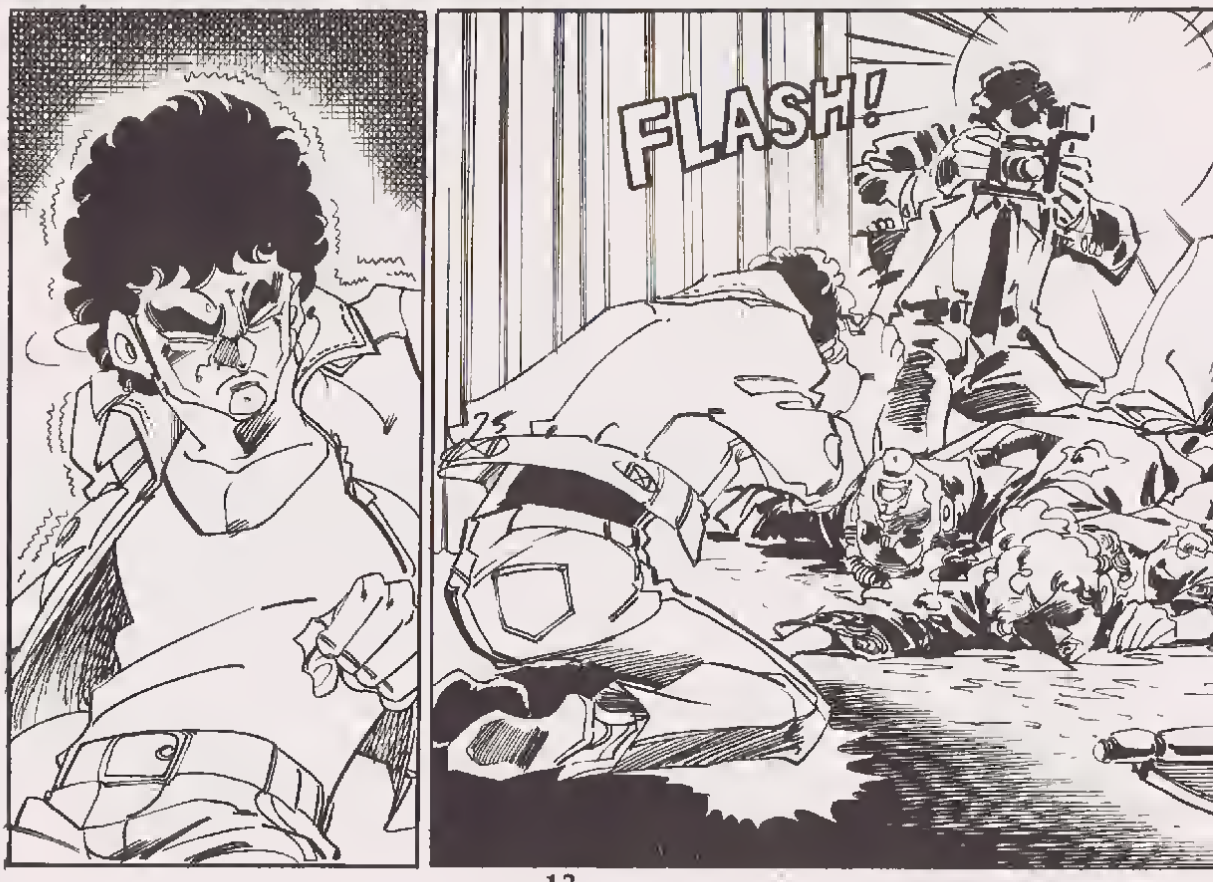
SKREEEECH!
JASON, GET IN! WHEREVER YOU'RE GOING, I CAN GET YOU THERE FASTER IN THE CAR.
VROOOOM!

SKREEEE!


HOLD IT! THIS IS A RESTRICTED ACCESS AREA!

OUT OF MY WAY! THIS IS MY HOUSE, MAN!
SHOVE!
!


MOM!
DAD!
OH,
MY GOD!
IT CAN'T
BE...


FLASH!

MOM ! DAD!
NOOOOO!
YOU MUST BE MARCUS ROYT'S SON, JASON... I'M VERY SORRY, YOUNG MAN. I'M INSPECTOR KENT.
WHERE'S MY SISTER?! TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO MY SISTER!

I SAID WHERE'S MY SISTER, DAMN YOU!
IN THE OTHER ROOM....
KATHY!
OH, MY GOD, KATHY... SOB.

I'M VERY SORRY, JASON, WHEN SORROWS COME, THEY COME NOT SINGLE SPIES....* NOTHING I COULD SAY WOULD CONSOLE YOU....
*HAMLET IV:V:78-9
THERE'S NEVER A GOOD TIME FOR THIS, JASON, BUT I'M CONDUCTING THIS INVESTIGATION. I'D LIKE YOU TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS.
YOU JUST TELL ME WHO DID THIS SO I CAN TRACK THEM DOWN!
REVENGE IS A BITTER DISH, JASON. YOU LEAVE THE TRACKING TO ME. THAT'S MY JOB. JUST HELP ME OUT BY ANSWERING A FEW QUESTIONS.
TELL ME WHERE YOU WERE AND WHAT YOU WERE DOING TONIGHT BEGINNING AT FIVE P.M., OKAY?
WHY THE HELL SHOULD I TELL YOU WHAT I WAS DOING? HOW'S THAT GONNA HELP YOU FIND THE BASTARDS WHO MURDERED MY FAMILY?!

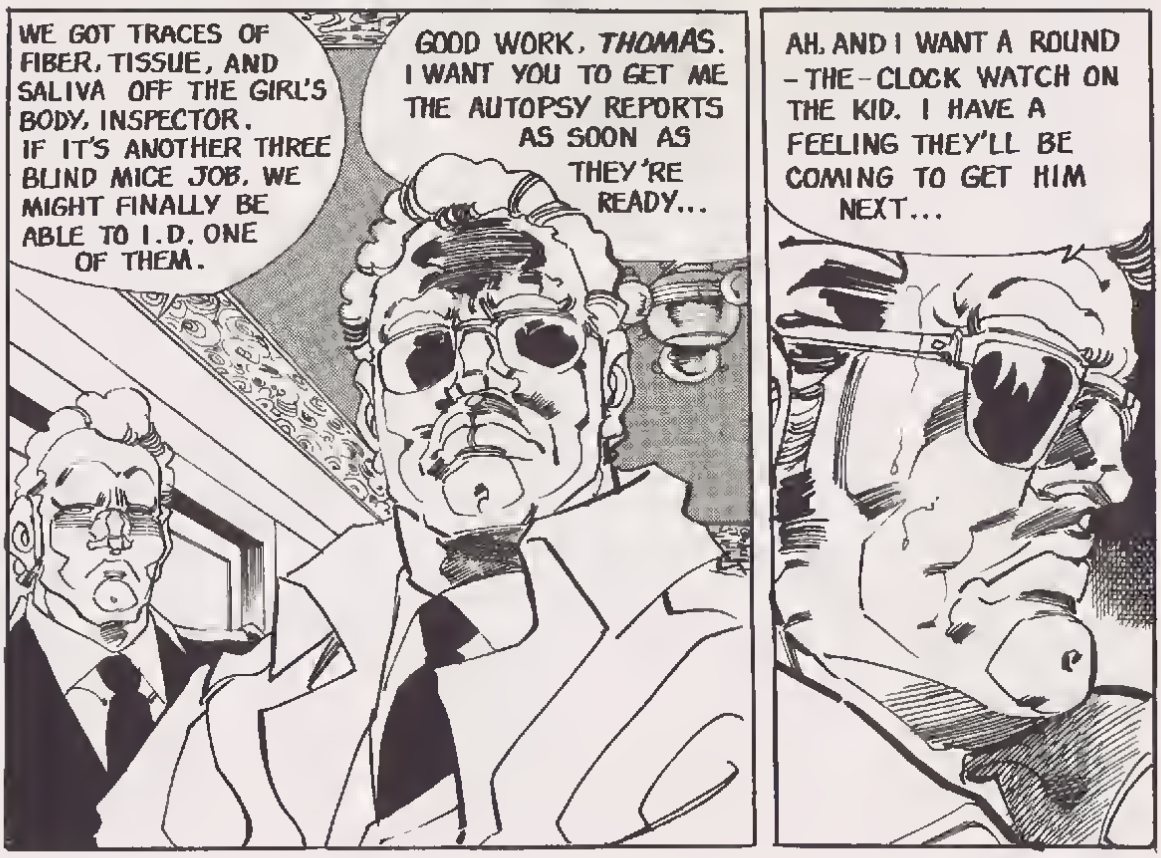
YOU FIND THOSE BASTARDS QUICK, MISTER! 'CAUSE IF I GET TO THEM FIRST YOU'RE JUST GONNA HAVE ANOTHER KILLER ON YOUR HANDS!
WHY DON'T YOU COOL IT, JASON...
YOU WON'T BE DOING ANYONE A FAVOR BY RUSHING OUT THERE LIKE A HOT-TEMPERED MOOR. CALM DOWN.
I PROMISE I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIND WHO DID THIS. BUT YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME OUT, RIGHT?
IT LOOKS LIKE A PROFESSIONAL JOB TO ME. DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO MIGHT HAVE HAD A GRUDGE AGAINST YOUR FATHER?
I DON'T WANT YOU TO DISCUSS THIS WITH ANYONE, BUT THE M.O. HERE CLEARLY SUGGESTS IT'S A MOB EXECUTION. WAS YOUR FATHER INVOLVED WITH THEM, JASON?

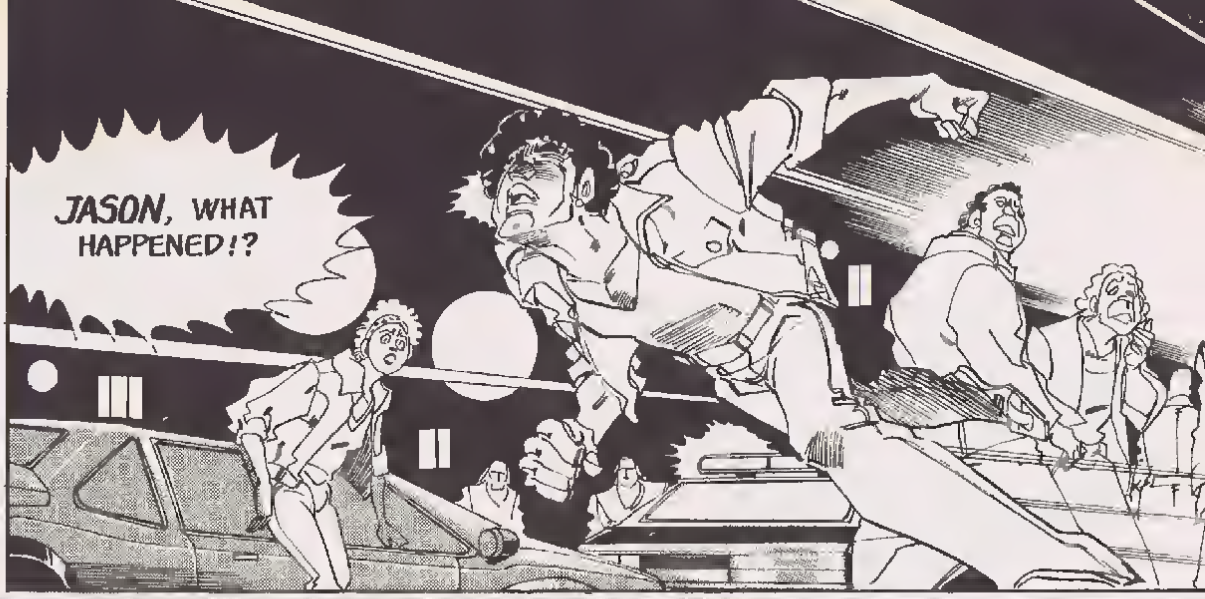
MY DAD'S AN HONEST BUSINESSMAN! HE WOULD NEVER DO ANYTHING THAT WAS ILLEGAL!
WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE YOUR FATHER WAS WORKING FOR A LOCAL MAFIA BOSS, JASON.
WHAT ?! THAT'S A DAMN LIE ! MY DAD ISN'T WORKING FOR THE MAFIA!
I KNOW YOU CARED A LOT FOR YOUR FATHER, JASON. YOU JUST SPOKE OF HIM AGAIN IN THE PRESENT TENSE.
SO I KNOW YOU WON'T WANT YOUR FATHER'S GOOD NAME CONNECTED WITH THE LOCAL MAFIA.
YOU REALIZE THAT AS A PROMOTER OF PRO-WRESTLING HE MUST HAVE HAD A LOT OF TEMPTING OFFERS TO RIG MATCHES. PEOPLE WILL ALREADY ASSUME HE WAS CORRUPT, JASON.
YOU CAN HELP ME CLEAR HIS NAME BY GIVING ME SOME INFORMATION. TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW--IT'LL MAKE THINGS A LOT EASIER.

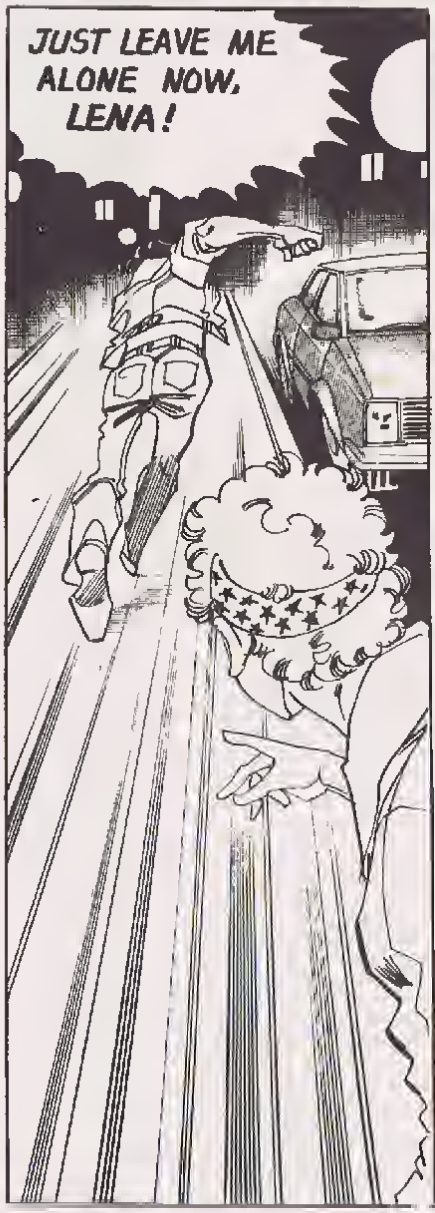
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE INVESTIGATING HERE!? MY FAMILY'S BEEN GUNNED DOWN!
WHY ARE YOU ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT MY DAD? HE'S THE VICTIM, NOT THE CRIMINAL, DAMN IT!
IF YOU DON'T FIND WHO DID THIS RIGHT AWAY, INSPECTOR, I'M WARNING YOU- I'LL FIND THEM MYSELF. AND THERE WON'T BE ANY DEATH ROW FOR THEM TO WAIT ON... I'LL FRY THEM MYSELF!

PRETTY ILL-TEMPERED KID, EH, INSPECTOR?
HE'S JUST STRUTTING AND FRETTING HIS HOUR UPON THE STAGE LIKE THE REST OF US PETTY PLAYERS, THOMAS.

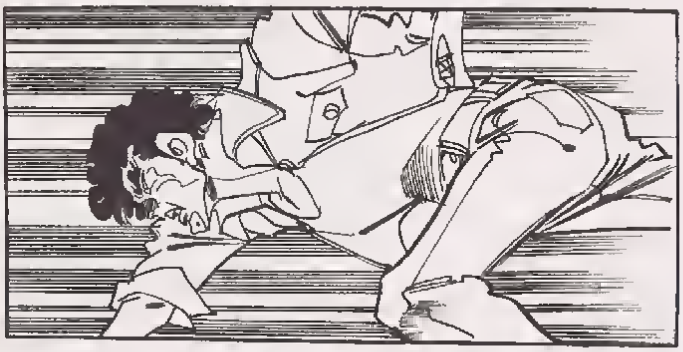
WERE YOU ABLE TO LEARN ANYTHING FROM HIM? NOT THE MOST COOPERATIVE TYPE, I'D SAY.
HE DEFINITELY KNOWS SOMETHING, BUT HE'S NOT ABOUT TO TELL. I EXPECT HE'LL TRY SOMETHING FOOLISH FIRST.

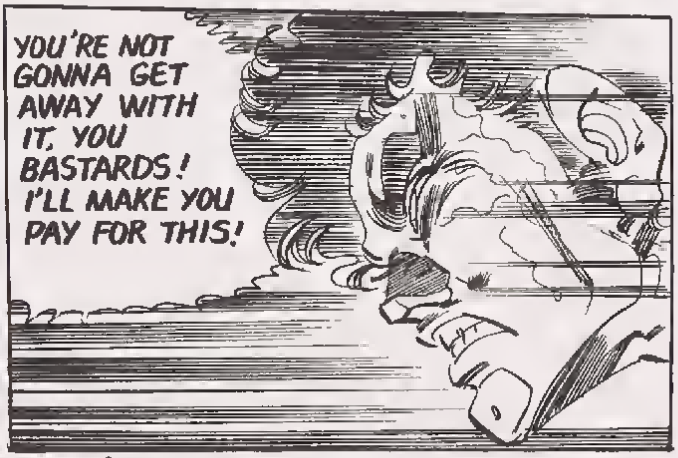

WE GOT TRACES OF FIBER, TISSUE, AND SALIVA OFF THE GIRL'S BODY, INSPECTOR. IF IT'S ANOTHER THREE BLIND MICE JOB, WE MIGHT FINALLY BE ABLE TO I.D. ONE OF THEM.
GOOD WORK, THOMAS. I WANT YOU TO GET ME THE AUTOPSY REPORTS AS SOON AS THEY'RE READY...
AH, AND I WANT A ROUND-THE-CLOCK WATCH ON THE KID. I HAVE A FEELING THEY'LL BE COMING TO GET HIM NEXT...


JASON, WHAT HAPPENED!?


JUST LEAVE ME ALONE NOW, LENA!

WILL I SEE YOU TOMORROW, JASON?



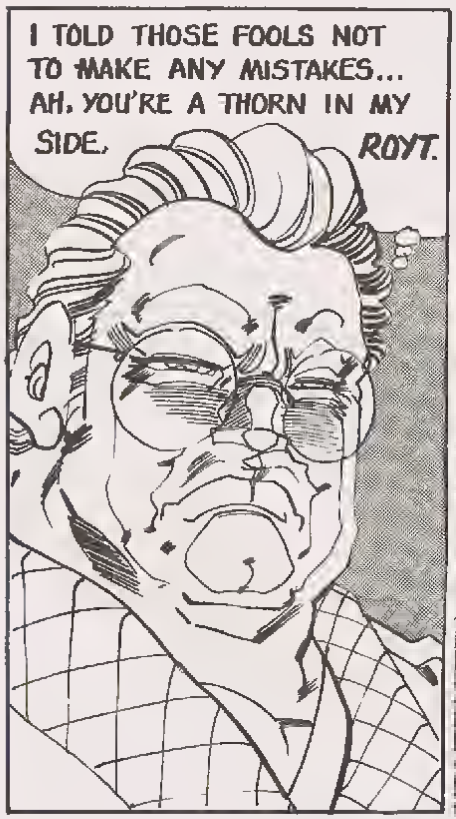

YOU'RE NOT GONNA GET AWAY WITH IT, YOU BASTARDS! I'LL MAKE YOU PAY FOR THIS!

LENA, COULD YOU COME OVER HERE FOR A MOMENT?
WHAT IS IT, DADDY?
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
I'M TIRED NOW, DADDY. CAN'T YOU TALK TO ME SOME OTHER TIME?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, HONEY? WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO AVOID ME?
IT'S NOTHING, REALLY. I JUST DON'T FEEL LIKE TALKING RIGHT NOW, THAT'S ALL.

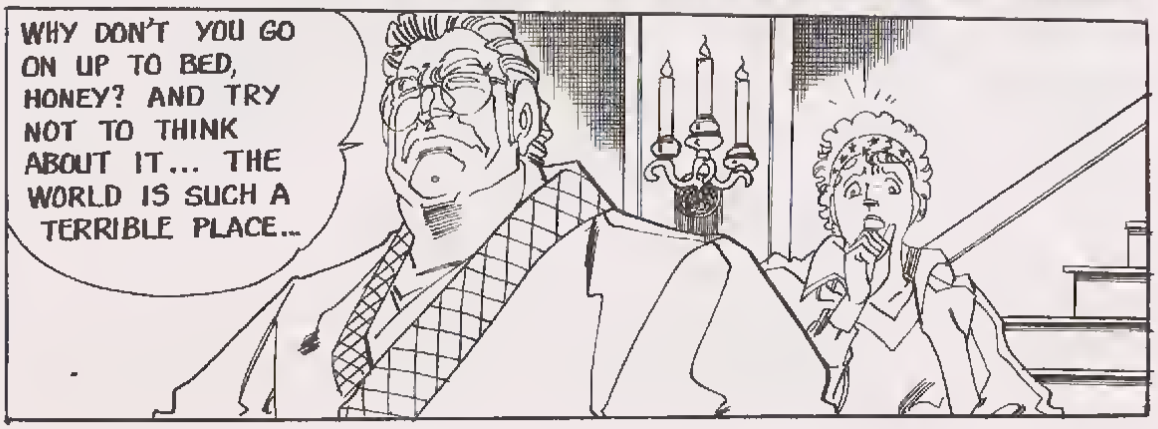
POOR DEAR. IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING UPSETTING. NOW WHY DON'T YOU JUST TELL YOUR DADDY?
DID YOU HAVE ANOTHER FIGHT WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND?
OH, DADDY, IT'S REALLY TERRIBLE!
NOW COME ON AND TELL YOUR DADDY ALL ABOUT IT. WHAT DID THAT HORRIBLE BOYFRIEND OF YOURS DO TO MY LITTLE PRINCESS THIS TIME? COME ON, YOU CAN TELL ME, CAN'T YOU?
OH, DADDY, I DIDN'T GET INTO A FIGHT. SNIFF... IT'S MY BOYFRIEND, BUT NOT SOMETHING HE DID. IT'S SO AWFUL, DADDY...

SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAPPENED TO JASON'S FAMILY TONIGHT... SOB.
JASON?
I'M SO SORRY, BABY.... WAS IT A CAR ACCIDENT? IS THERE ANYTHING I COULD DO TO HELP THEM?
DADDY.... T-THEY WERE ALL GUNNED DOWN WHILE THEY WERE HAVING DINNER ....MURDERED!
IS JASON OKAY? WHAT'S HIS LAST NAME, LENA?
JASON? HE'S FINE. HIS NAME'S ROYT. WHY?

JASON ROYT! THOSE BUMBLING IDIOTS LET HIM LIVE! DAMN!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, DADDY? DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG? WHY DO YOU LOOK SO UPSET ALL OF A SUDDEN?


I TOLD THOSE FOOLS NOT TO MAKE ANY MISTAKES... AH, YOU'RE A THORN IN MY SIDE, ROYT.

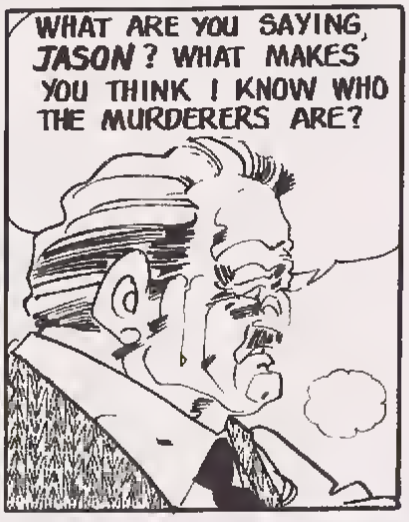
IT'S NOTHING, LENA. I THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED THE NAME, BUT I MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING OF MY FRIEND, REUTER....


WHY DON'T YOU GO ON UP TO BED, HONEY? AND TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT... THE WORLD IS SUCH A TERRIBLE PLACE...

OH MY GOD! JASON, COME IN.
I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FAMILY LAST NIGHT, JASON. I'M TERRIBLY SORRY...
YOUR DAD'S HOME, ISN'T HE, LAURA?
YEAH. HE'S HAVING HIS BREAKFAST RIGHT NOW. COME ON...
JASON! COME IN, SON. HAVE A SEAT AND JOIN ME.
FINISH YOUR BREAKFAST, MR. WILSON. I CAN WAIT FOR YOU OUT HERE.

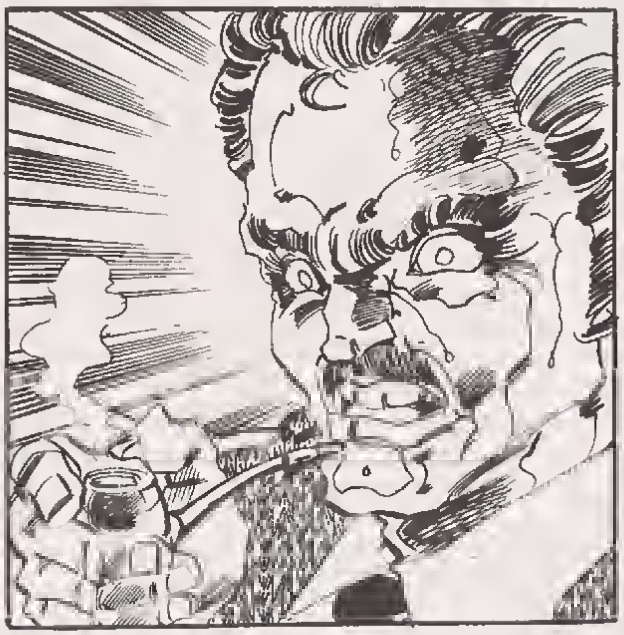
LET ME OFFER YOU MY CONDOLENCES, JASON. IT'S A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FAMILY. I HOPE THEY FIND WHO DID IT.
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, MR. WILSON. I NEED TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.

I WANT YOU TO TELL ME WHO MURDERED MY FAMILY.


WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, JASON? WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I KNOW WHO THE MURDERERS ARE?

COME ON, MR. WILSON, YOU AND MY DAD ARE THE TWO TOP PROMOTERS OF PRO WRESTLING IN NEWPORT CITY. YOU AND HE WORK TOGETHER ALL THE TIME ON THE BIG MATCHES.

THAT'S RIGHT, JASON. BUT HOW IS THAT CONNECTED IN ANY WAY WITH THE MURDER OF YOUR FAMILY?
WHEN HE WAS SETTING UP THIS LAST MATCH, THE MOB WAS PRESSURING MY DAD TO RIG IT. YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU?



I WAS WALKING DOWN THE HALL TO MY ROOM ONE NIGHT AND I HEARD HIM TALKING TO MY MOM ABOUT IT.

HE WAS TELLING MY MOM THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF MONEY INVOLVED AND THEY WERE THREA-TENING HIM. HE SAID THEY MADE THE SAME OFFER TO OTHERS.

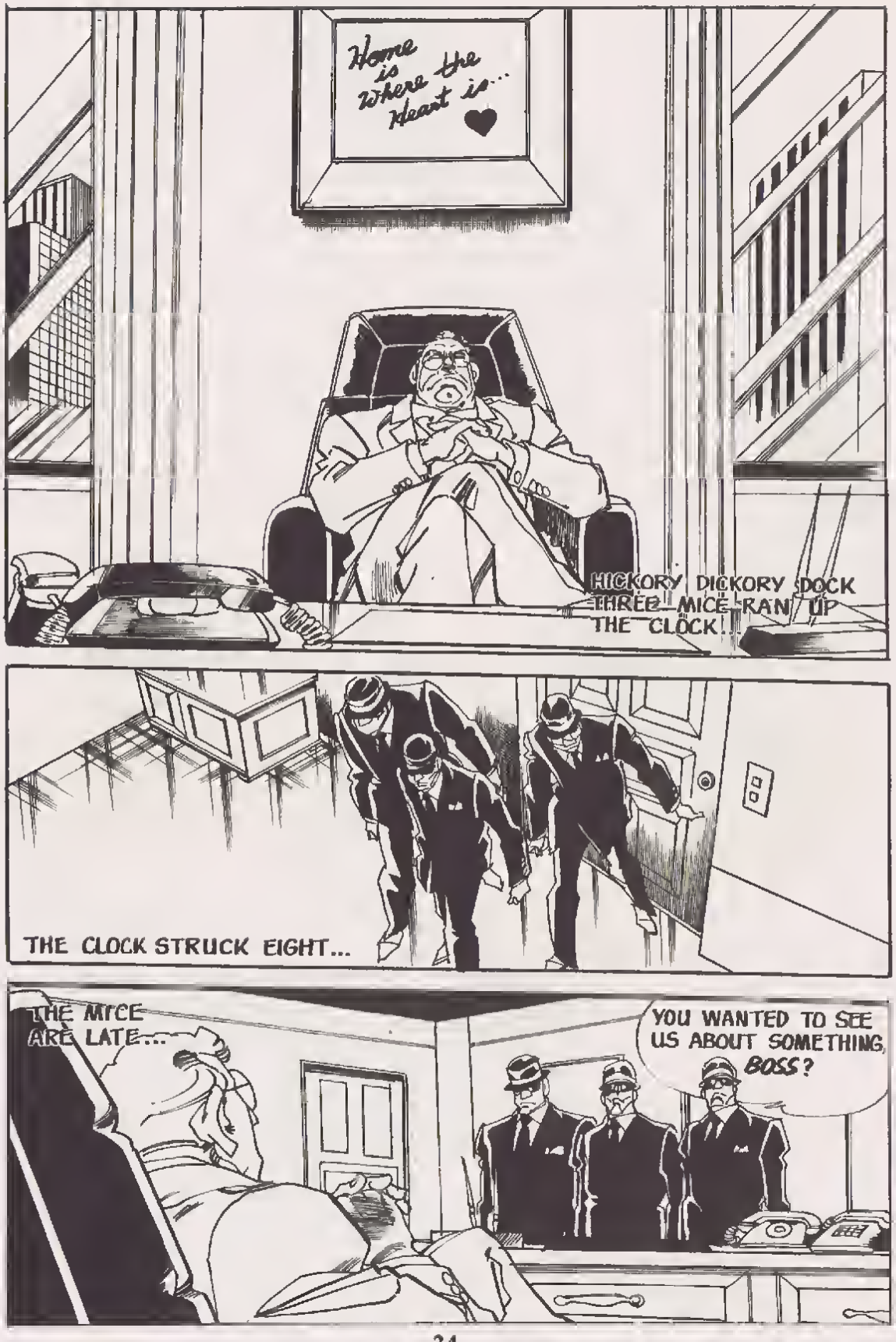
IT DOESN'T REALLY TAKE MUCH BRAINS TO FIGURE OUT THAT THEY MUST HAVE MADE YOU THE SAME OFFER, MR. WILSON. AND IF YOU REFUSED...
THEY MUST HAVE THREATENED YOUR FAMILY, TOO. SO I WANT YOU TO TELL ME WHO THOSE BASTARDS ARE!
I'M SORRY, JASON, BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...
DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME, MR. WILSON!
THOSE CROOKS KILLED MY FAMILY! THEY'RE A BUNCH OF COLD-BLOODED MURDERERS!

YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME FIND THEM, MR. WILSON. WE CAN'T LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT!
JASON, HAVE YOU TOLD THE POLICE ANY-THING ABOUT THIS?
WHY? DOES THAT SCARE YOU, MR. WILSON? I KNOW YOU KNOW SOMETHING, BUT WHY SHOULD I LET THE POLICE KNOW ANYTHING?
I KNOW THEY WON'T DO A DAMNED THING ABOUT THIS BECAUSE THE MOB'S INVOLVED. I JUST NEED TO KNOW FOR MYSELF.

I'M SORRY, JASON. I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU. I'M SORRY...
FINE! I'LL FIND OUT FOR MYSELF THEN, YOU DAMNED COWARD! THEY BOUGHT YOU, DIDN'T THEY!?
I DON'T NEED YOU OR THE POLICE. I'LL HUNT THOSE BASTARDS DOWN AND PAY THEM BACK MYSELF!

WAIT, JASON!
PLEASE, DON'T BE SO ANGRY AT MY DAD. HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH, JASON.
I HEARD WHAT YOU WERE SAYING IN THERE. MY FATHER REALLY DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
HE KNOWS DAMNED WELL WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT! HE TOOK THEIR MONEY
I SAW THE GUILTY LOOK ON HIS FACE WHEN HE WAS LISTENING TO ME! HE'S SCARED!

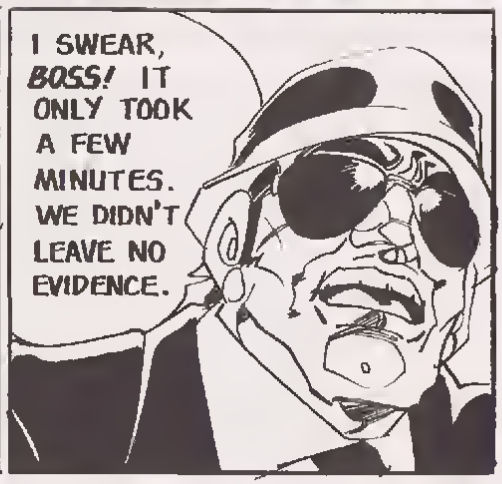
YEAH, HE MUST BE SCARED TO DEATH OF THEM. HE'S GOT A FAMILY AFTER ALL... YOU AND YOUR MOTHER...
ONE PEEP OUT OF HIM AND HE'D COME HOME ONE NIGHT TO FIND WHAT I FOUND... BLOOD! EVERYWHERE!
NO, JASON. HE'S A GOOD MAN. HE WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU IF HE'D KNOWN ANYTHING.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HE KNOWS! HE KNOWS THEY'LL DO TO YOU WHAT THEY DID TO MY SISTER!

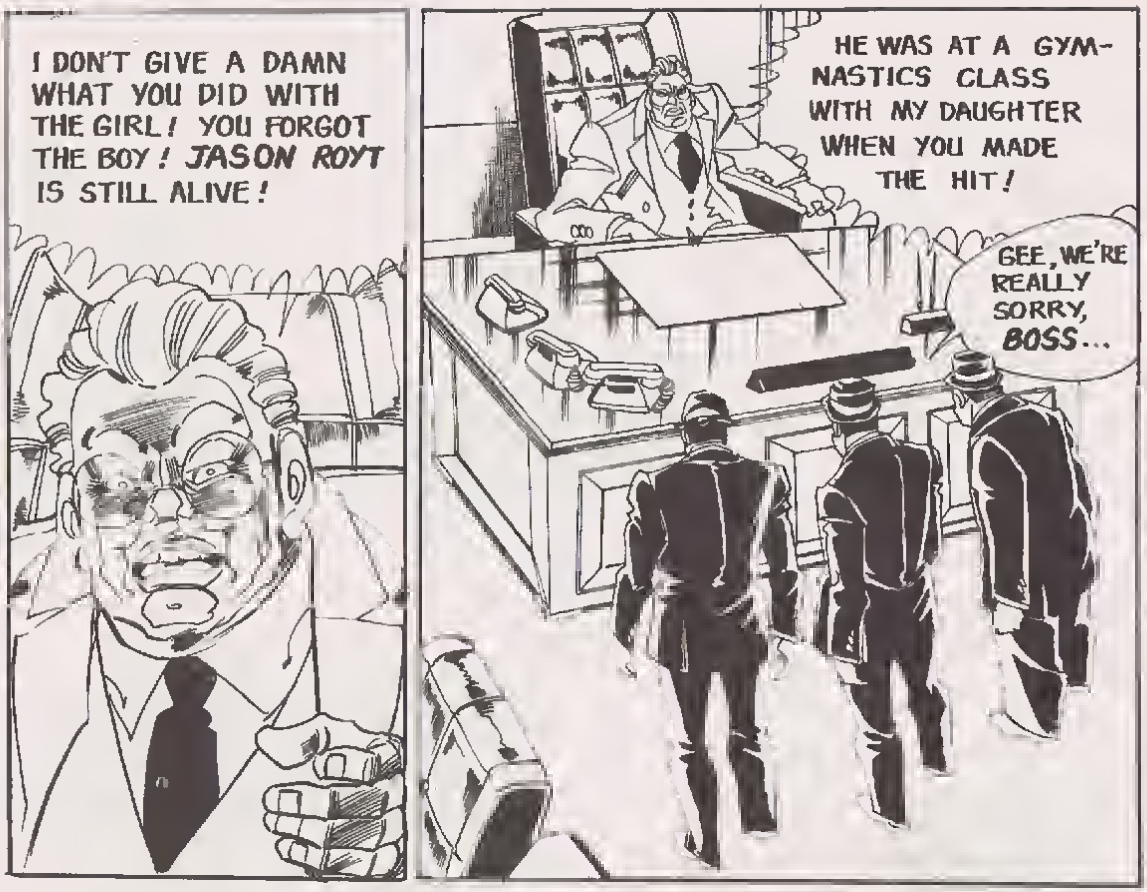

Home is where the Heart is...
HICKORY DICKORY DOCK THREE MICE RAN UP THE CLOCK!
THE CLOCK STRUCK EIGHT...
THE MICE ARE LATE...
YOU WANTED TO SEE US ABOUT SOMETHING, BOSS?

THE POLICE CALL YOU GUYS THE THREE BLIND MICE, DON'T THEY, BOYS?
YEAH, AIN'T THAT A BLAST, BOSS? WE EVEN GOT OUR OWN NICKNAME.

WELL, I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE THE WHOLE GOD-DAMNED MICKEY MOUSE CLUB! I TOLD YOU THERE WERE TO BE ABSOLUTELY NO MISTAKES LAST NIGHT!
WE GOT ALL OF THEM, BOSS. NO MISTAKES. J-JUST.
SMACK!

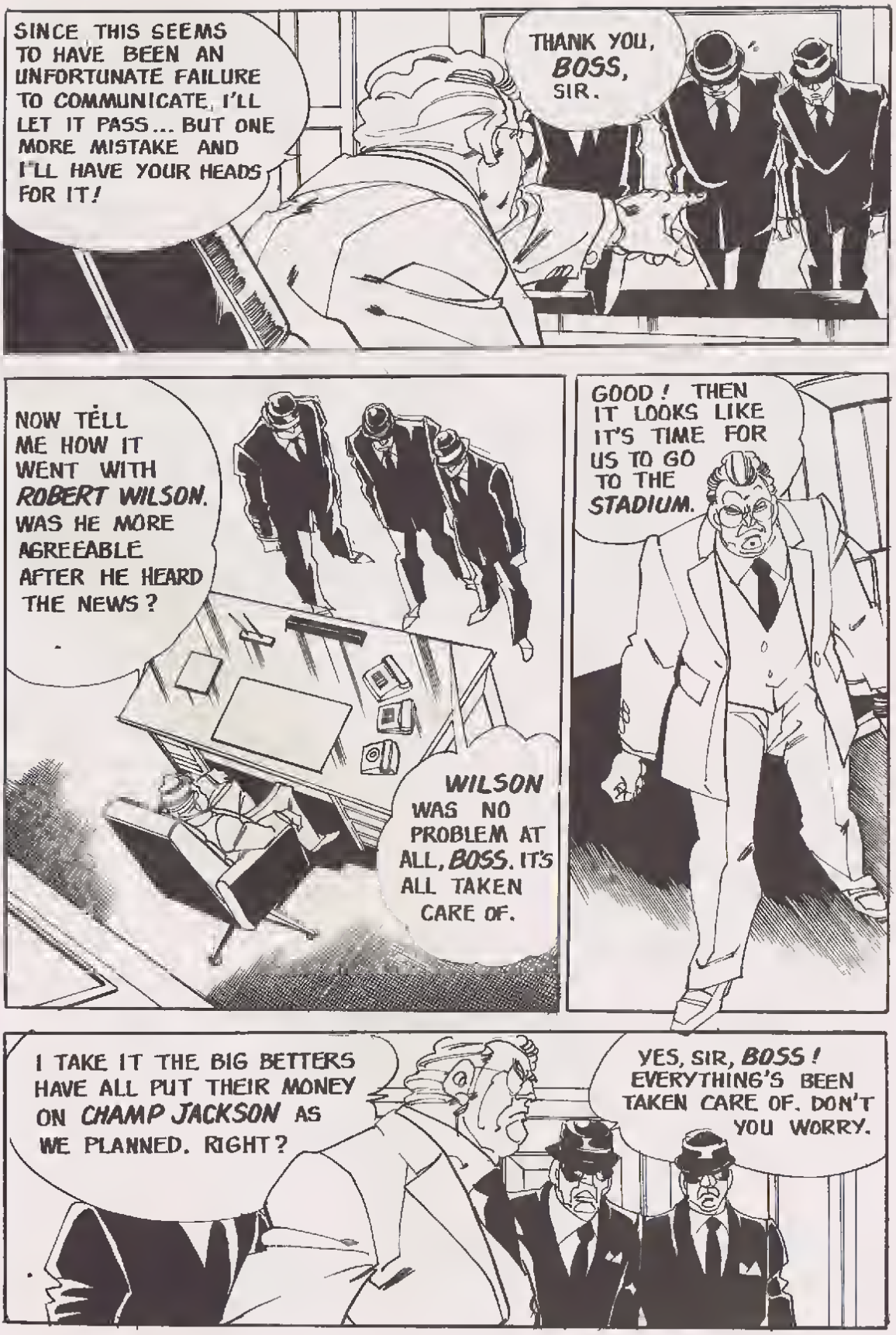
DAMN! I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU GUYS TAKE YOUR TIME WITH THAT GIRL!


I SWEAR, BOSS! IT ONLY TOOK A FEW MINUTES. WE DIDN'T LEAVE NO EVIDENCE.


I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT YOU DID WITH THE GIRL! YOU FORGOT THE BOY! JASON ROYT IS STILL ALIVE!
HE WAS AT A GYM-NASTICS CLASS WITH MY DAUGHTER WHEN YOU MADE THE HIT!
GEE, WE'RE REALLY SORRY, BOSS...

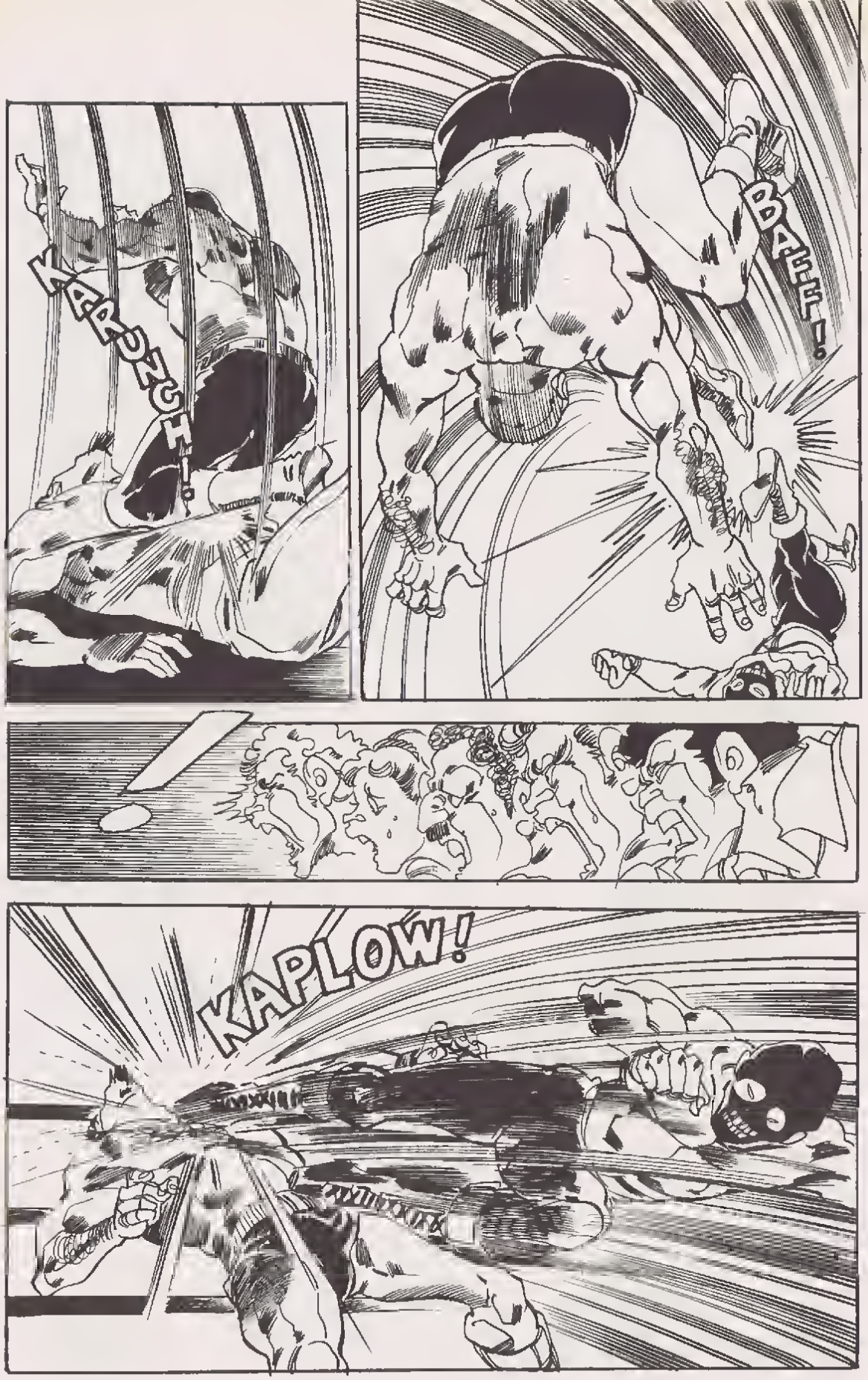
WE DIDN'T KNOW ROYT EVEN HAD A SON. WHEN YOU SAID HE HAD A FAMILY OF THREE, WE FIGURED IT WAS ROYT AND TWO OTHERS...

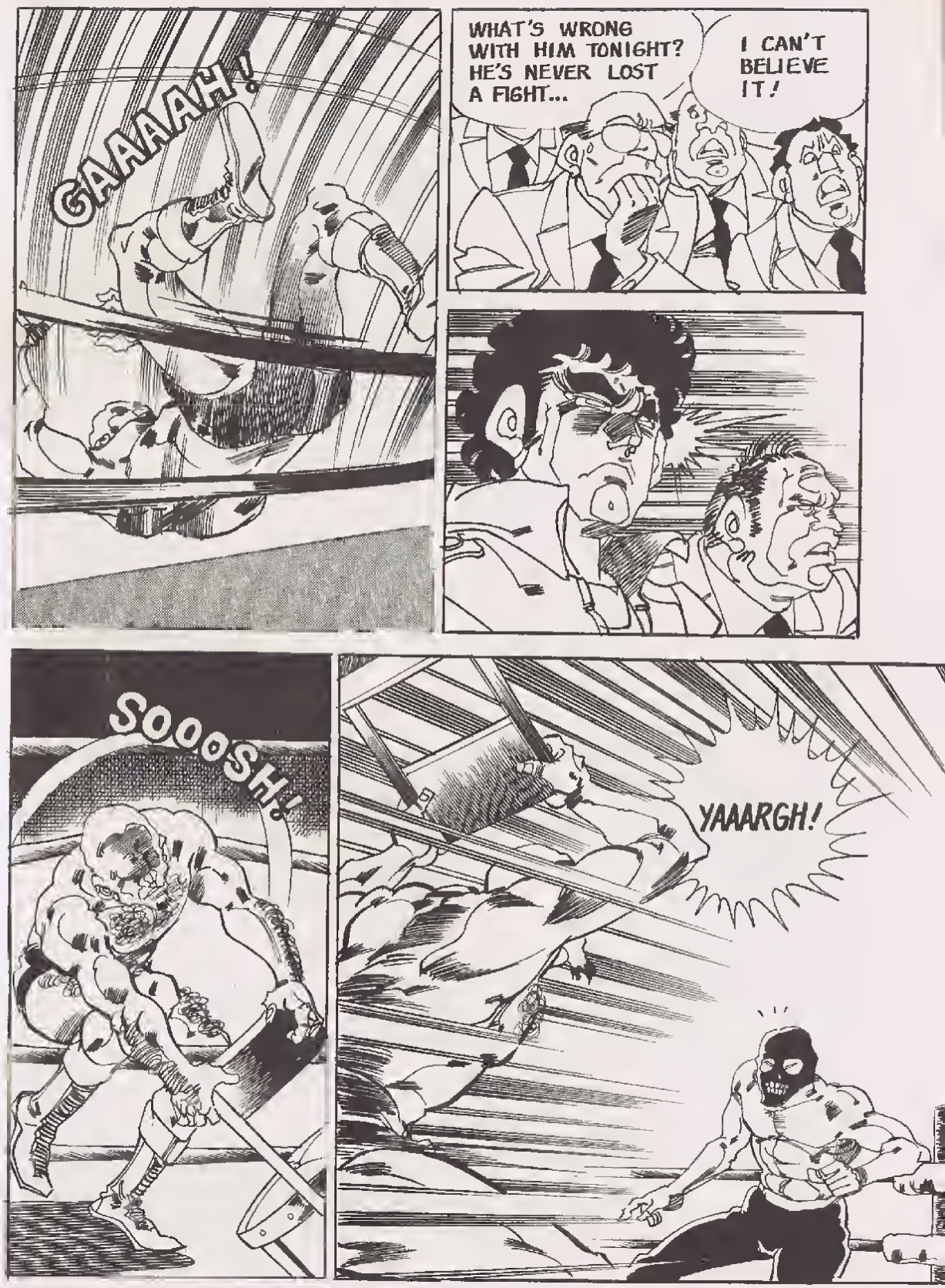
WE'LL GET THE KID FOR YOU RIGHT AWAY, BOSS!


SINCE THIS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AN UNFORTUNATE FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE, I'LL LET IT PASS... BUT ONE MORE MISTAKE AND I'LL HAVE YOUR HEADS FOR IT!
THANK YOU, BOSS, SIR.
NOW TELL ME HOW IT WENT WITH ROBERT WILSON. WAS HE MORE AGREEABLE AFTER HE HEARD THE NEWS?
WILSON WAS NO PROBLEM AT ALL, BOSS. IT'S ALL TAKEN CARE OF.
GOOD! THEN IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR US TO GO TO THE STADIUM.
I TAKE IT THE BIG BETTERS HAVE ALL PUT THEIR MONEY ON CHAMP JACKSON AS WE PLANNED. RIGHT?
YES, SIR, BOSS! EVERYTHING'S BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. DON'T YOU WORRY.

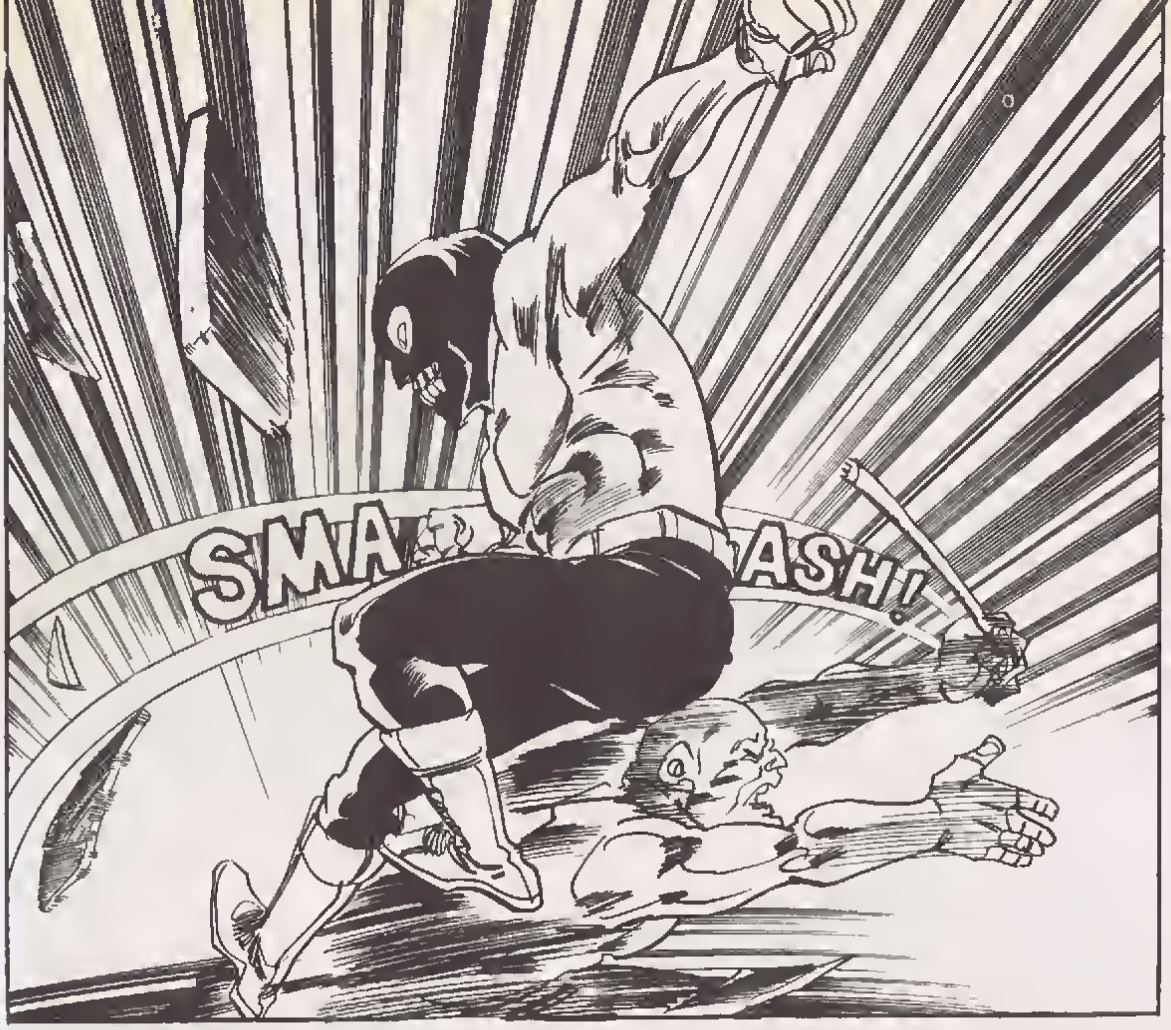
CHAMP JACKSON vs DREAD SKULL
BUSTLE
BUSTLE
SHOVE
PUSH
SO THIS IS THE BIG MATCH THAT COST ME MY FAMILY...

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THE DREAD SKULL'S MOPPING THE FLOOR WITH OL' CHAMP!
COME ON, CHAMP! THE SKULL'S A NOBODY! SHOW HIM YOUR STUFF! GRAND SLAM HIS UGLY FACE!
BASH!
GRAB!
SMASH!
COME ON, CHAMP!


KARUZUHI!
BAFF!
KAPLOW!


GAAAAH!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM TONIGHT? HE'S NEVER LOST A FIGHT...
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
SOOOSH!
YAAARGH!

MY GOD, WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO HIM? CHAMP'S NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE!
DON'T BE A COWARD, CHAMP! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU TONIGHT?!
POUNCE!
LEAP!


SMA
ASH!

DAMN YOU, JACKSON!
I'LL NEVER CHEER FOR YOU AGAIN, YOU BUM!

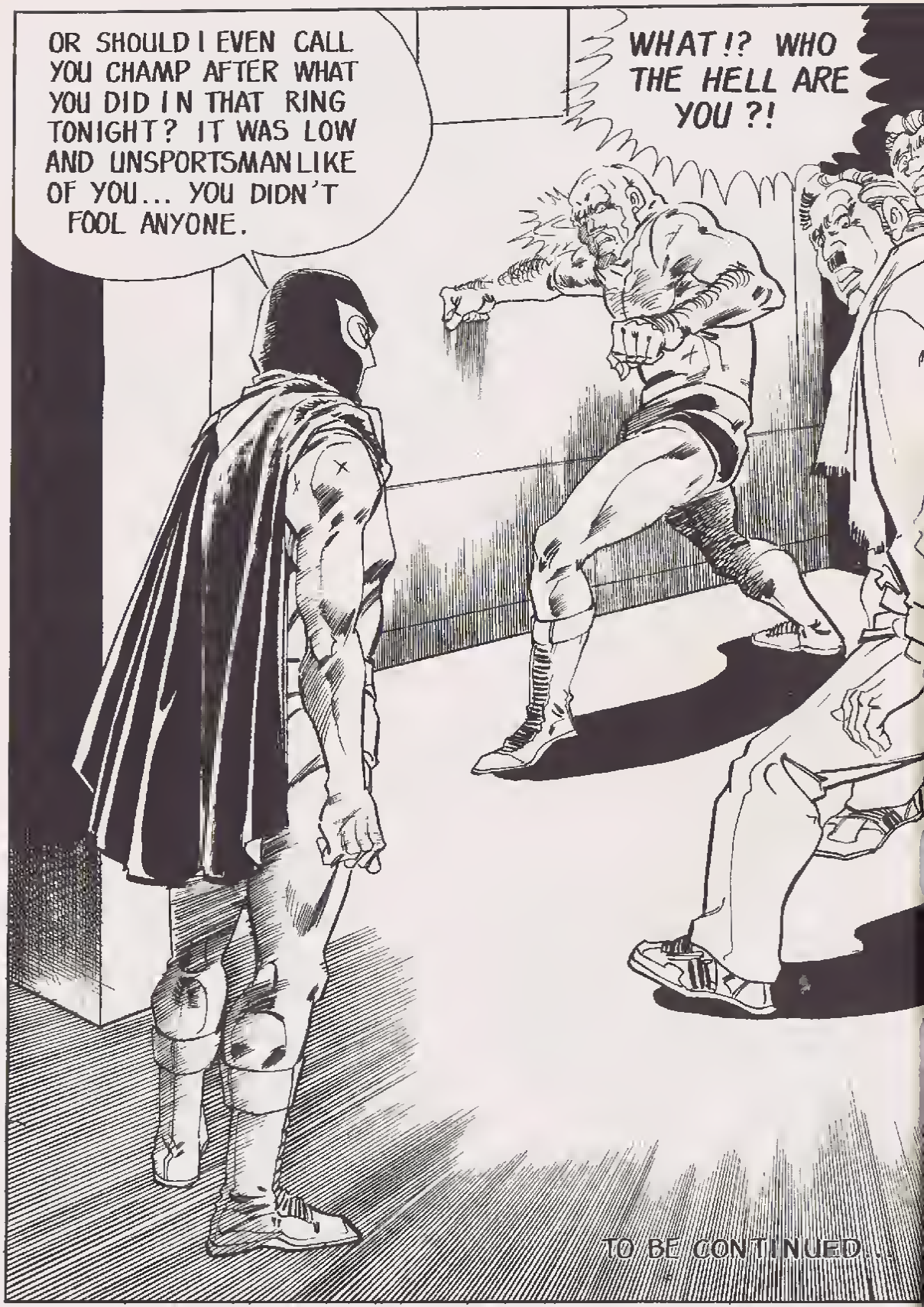
WELL, BOSS, I THINK IT'S OVER NOW.
BOOOO! BOOOO!

BOOOOOOO!
MR. WILSON!

WILSON AND JACKSON BOTH LOOK SO GUILTY...
HARDLY A CONVINCING WAY TO RIG A BIG MATCH LIKE THIS ONE, BUT IT SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED...
THAT'S THE LAST TIME I PUT MY MONEY ON CHAMP JACKSON!
THAT MARCUS ROYT MUSTA BEEN A CROOK!
WHAT?! WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?!
DIDN'T YOU HEAR? THE PROMOTER WHO RIGGED THIS MATCH GOT BLOWN AWAY LAST NIGHT. SERVES THAT SUCKER RIGHT!
INSPECTOR KENT WAS RIGHT...
I'LL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS IF IT KILLS ME...

COME ON, CHAMP, LET'S GET YOUR BACK TREATED. IT'S A MESS.
GET OUTTA MY FACE, WILSON!
YAAAA!

SMASH!
GRNNNNN!
KRAK!
WHY DID I LET HIM HUMILIATE ME LIKE THAT?
IS THAT WHY YOU'RE TAKING OUT YOUR ANGER ON THAT WALL, CHAMP JACKSON?


OR SHOULD I EVEN CALL YOU CHAMP AFTER WHAT YOU DID IN THAT RING TONIGHT? IT WAS LOW AND UNSPORTSMAN LIKE OF YOU... YOU DIDN'T FOOL ANYONE.
WHAT!? WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!
TO BE CONTINUED...

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